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China, Our Chief Far East Problem

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WE all know that the Conference at Washington¹ was called primarily to reduce the building of armaments, but that our President thought it also necessary, in that connection, to bring about, if possible, an adjustment of the political conditions in the Far East which, if not corrected, might lead to war in the future. Therefore he invited not simply the first five powers that were to participate in the Arms Conference, but the four additional powers, that had political or economic interests in the Pacific and Far East.

I wish to say a word or two as to the political situation in the Far East. The political equation there is one of three terms: First, there is China with its vast stretches of territory, and its great population, numbering a quarter of the human race; second, there is Japan with its eager, aggressive, ambitious and increasing people; and third, there are the interests of the Western powers.

CHINA UNDER FOREIGN CONTACT

First, of China. The Chinese people, as has often been said, have an authentic history of four thousand years. They are one of the greatest peoples that have lived on the globe. They have created for themselves a civilization that has been the admiration of all those who have studied it. They built up for themselves a culture, an art, a social life and a polity that was admirably adapted to their dominant agricultural needs, and which har-

monized with their social life, a system of government which proved defective only when brought into contact with the Western industrial life. Thus it has been said that China maintained herself unaided for four thousand years, but began to fall when she began to get aid from the Western World. There is much truth in this for, from the time she was brought into contact with the West and forced to accept Western ideas and to meet the military competition of the Western nations, her own system of political rule proved weak and defective. That system relied more on reason than on force. It had not the appliances of Western mechanical life. Thus the Western nations were able, one after another, to tie bonds about China until she became almost helpless. Thus it has come about that nearly all the foreigners in China live under their own laws and are responsible to their own officials.

In many of the so-called treaty ports foreigners have municipal areas termed concessions or settlements where they have their own local governments, practically free from Chinese administrative control. What is perhaps most serious of all, the nations have deprived China of the control of her own customs revenues. They have made it impossible for China to levy more than a five per cent tax on any of the commodities imported into or exported from China. She must get the unanimous consent of the treaty-powers before she can increase her tariff. The treaty allows her five per cent, but she has been able to collect, because of undervaluation of commodi-

¹Conference on Limitation of Armament, Washington, November 11, 1921. This paper was written before the Conference had completed its work.—Editor.

ties, only three to three and a half per cent ad valorem.

Not content with rights wrung from China by means of treaties which she has felt herself constrained to sign, some of the powers have exercised rights and powers in China without even the semblance of treaty permission. They have stationed troops at various points in China. Japan now has 1,200 to 1,500 men at Hankow, in the center of China, one thousand miles up the river. She has had them there for ten years. There are many other foreigners there, but none of the other nations have thought it necessary to protect their nationals by stationing troops. Some of the nations have established wireless stations without treaty right. In Peking I could put a letter in a foreign post office and send it anywhere. All those post offices are there without any treaty right.

THE NEW REPUBLIC

In 1911 China started upon the great experiment of a republic to replace the forty-centuries-old monarchy. The result of such a transition necessarily brought about a certain amount of discontent and a temporary weakening of authority. But a republic requires for its support the loyal, active obedience and sympathy of its own people and it is impossible for them to have that respect for a government which is treated as the Chinese government has been treated by other nations. This, the Western powers have now recognized. They now see that one of the problems of the Far East is to rehabilitate China, to aid her to establish an orderly government.

This is what the Conference at Washington is trying to do. It has made provision for getting rid of all the foreign post offices. They will be removed by the end of this year.

China has got very little with reference to tariff legislation. She is allowed to levy an effective five per cent, but that is only what the treaties have allowed her, and that she will not get for some time. The question of the right which all foreigners now have to live under their own laws and be responsible only to their own officials, is also important. The Conference has provided that there shall be a committee appointed to investigate conditions in China with a view to determining how soon and by what steps this condition of affairs can be relieved, and China thus made the mistress of her own affairs. While I am speaking of foreigners, I should say there is no country in the world where foreigners are so safe, both as to life and property, as they are in China.

THE JAPANESE MENACE

Not only are China's autonomous powers limited in the manner in which I have been speaking, but her very political existence is threatened. Russia was certainly a threatening menace to her at one time. But, since 1905, the menace has been from Japan—a small but aggressive power, militaristic, bureaucratic and imperialistic. You all know the history of Japan and Korea—how Japan took Korea under her protection and in five years annexed her. I do not need to speak to you of how she took the place of Russia in Manchuria; how, through the control of the South Manchurian Railroad, she has claimed the right to maintain police, to maintain troops, who exercise political jurisdiction, and in other ways to exercise a dominating influence in the great Manchurian provinces with twenty millions of population.

I do not need to mention to you the now famous or infamous "Twenty-one Demands" which Japan put forward

in 1915. The chief question which is still before the Conference is: "What relief is China to get from those demands and what assurance are the other powers to get?" because, after all, the most important political element in the Far East is this penetration, this military and political penetration of Japan into eastern Asia. Japan makes claim to a sort of preferential right in those regions. She calls it "special interests," giving to this term a definition different from that which our government has given it. So long as Japan claims this special, indefinite, vague right she can go into Asia to take what she needs; and this is, to my mind, the point that is most likely to provoke future trouble in the Far East.

It seems to me that the Conference will fall far short of the goal which it has been striving to reach unless it can clear up this situation. The nations should say to Japan: "Do you claim special rights in those countries, and what are those rights? What, specifically, is it you claim to have by special right in Eastern Asia?"

THE QUESTION OF SHANTUNG

Finally, there is the question of Shantung. When Japan declared war against Germany, she claimed the right to attack the German-leased area of Kiaochow. China was then a neutral, but her government designated a region around and outside of the leased area, and said to the Japanese, "You can conduct military operations in that region." But instead of that Japan landed troops far away from that region and immediately took possession of the railroad running 265 miles from Tsintao to Tsinanfu, the capital of the province. This was done, it will be remembered, in the territory of a friendly power. No military necessity for this action ex-

isted, but Japan has been in possession of the railway ever since.

Naturally, the Chinese have looked on this as a mere military occupation which they have not been able to prevent, but which has given to the Japanese no equitable or legal title. Thus it was that the Chinese said they could not enter into direct negotiations with the Japanese in regard to that situation. Therefore, in Washington, Mr. Hughes and Mr. Balfour offered their good offices to the Japanese delegation and to the Chinese delegation to cause them to come together in informal conversations, which would not raise the question of legal rights, but which would approach the situation as a *de facto* one, and see if some agreement could not be reached. There have now been some twenty-five of these discussions. They have disposed of a good many matters. There were a great many questions as to what should be done with the various kinds of public properties, and the mode of valuing them.

When it came to the question of railroads, Japan declared, "Yes, we will give you back the railroad if you will pay us for it," and China said she would pay the entire assessed value of the railroad with all its appurtenant properties. "How will you pay it?" asked Japan, and China answered, "We will pay it in cash, in a lump cash sum." But Japan said she did not want that. Then the Chinese offered to pay it by deferred payments, running over a period of years. That, again, was not satisfactory. It finally appeared that what Japan particularly wanted was to keep control of the operation of the railroad for a number of years. That is, she wanted the chief engineer, the chief accountant and the traffic manager to be Japanese. What the outcome is to be, no one can say.

HOPE IN THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

It was not by accident or courtesy that China was asked to open the work of the Conference dealing with the Far East. It was because in her future is bound up the political future of the Far East; and therefore, unless the Washington Conference can take off enough of the bonds from China in accordance with the second of the so-called Root resolutions, to give her

an opportunity to develop for herself stable institutions; unless they can take the troops out of China; unless they can give her some greater degree of security and of financial autonomy, and thus enable her to become a strong, prosperous, central state, the Conference will certainly fail to achieve its purpose. If China is given that opportunity, I feel confident that she can, by her own effort, bring about this desired condition.

China and Her Reconstruction¹

By ADMIRAL TSAI

Member of the Chinese Delegation to the Conference on Limitation of Armament,
Washington, 1921

DR. SZE has given you a dinner, and Dr. Rowe evidently has asked me to give you a pinch of salt or a drop of sugar. You have just been told by Dr. Sze about conditions in China and I wish to speak a few words about the difficulties of the North and the South in China. But I do not wish you to understand it in the sense of 1861 and 1865. We have a North and South problem, but it is a little different. The difference between the North and the South in China is a difference between politicians in regard to the constitution; and whenever the two parties have not agreed, that party which was not the recognized government has bolted down to Canton. Now suppose Mr. Wilson had been defeated in the election, and that he would go to Florida and say, "I left Washington, licked. I will do a little on my own in Florida."

If you sent five hundred dollars from Pekin to Canton, through the post

¹This paper was written before the Disarmament Conference had completed its work.
C. L. K.

office or any other way, you would get it. If anybody in Canton sent to me in Pekin a basket of bananas, I would get it in Pekin. Out of the ninety-five members of the delegation that came with me, seventy-four were from the southern provinces yet they were all commissioned by the northern or recognized government. The so-called North and South question is simply that one government functions in the North and the other so-called government functions in the South; and it has nothing to do with the people. The people are entirely united. Although we have been fighting for several years, you never heard of the northern portion of the Chinese fleet's going to the south to blockade any southern ports. Nor have you heard of the southern squadron's coming to the northern waters to besiege. You have never heard a gun fired. It is all on ink and paper. Ladies and gentlemen, I do acknowledge that we are having a civil war, but a very "civil" war.